



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

Southwestern Region
Forest Health
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Subject: Proposed 2006 Pinaleño Mountains Wildland Urban Interface Hazardous Fuels Project, Safford RD (saffordrd)

To: District Ranger, Safford RD

This letter serves as an evaluation for the proposed FY 2006 Pinaleño Mountains WUI Hazardous Fuels Project submitted by Craig Wilcox, Silviculturist. I met with Craig and Lisa Angle, Forester, and evaluated the proposed area on October 19, 2005. The proposal was submitted to cover approximately one-half the costs associated with fuels and dwarf mistletoe reduction on the 234-acre project area. The other half would be covered with fuels program dollars.

There are 5 areas identified for treatment and all are located in special use permit areas including summer recreational residences and communication sites. Tree densities are in excess of 200 square feet of basal area per acre (BA), with three of the five sites exceeding 250 BA. Most sites are steeply sloped. Current vegetative conditions on all sites are markedly different from historic conditions; with excessive understory tree densities of older seral stages.

The Turkey Flat summer home area can be divided into two sections that differ in forest conditions. The lower area is dominated by ponderosa pine with an understory of gambel oak, live oak, madrone, Douglas fir, white fir and southwestern white pine. There is fairly large group of old ponderosa pine snags and a scattering of more recent mortality caused by roundheaded pine beetle. Ponderosa pine is infected with dwarf mistletoe throughout most of the site. By contrast, the upper Turkey Flat summer home area is dominated by Douglas fir with some ponderosa pine, white fir, southwestern white pine and gambel oak. Douglas fir dwarf mistletoe infection is light to moderate.

Ladybug Saddle communications site is located in a dry ponderosa pine forest, on a steep slope, while the Heliograph communications site is on a higher elevation site with an aspen and ponderosa pine overstory and spruce and subalpine fir understory.

The last two areas, Old Columbine Summerhome area and Bible Camp, are on north facing slopes with Douglas fir and pine in the overstory and spruce and subalpine fir dominating the understory.

The primary objective for the Pinaleño Mountains WUI project is to promote the health and longevity of overstory trees by decreasing live fuel levels and reducing competition. To accomplish this goal, a 100 to 250 foot buffer area will be thinned around each of the special use sites by reducing the density of trees <9" dbh. Dwarf mistletoe infected trees will be selectively



targeted for removal. Small openings will be created by removing clumps of trees. Slash will be piled and burned. A broadcast burn will follow the small diameter tree removal on most sites.

In addition to agreeing with the proposed prescriptions, our office recommends that slash be generated between late summer and the end of December, if possible. Slash piles should be placed in stand openings as much as possible and the largest diameter slash put on the outside of the pile to promote quick drying. Tepee style slash piles with branches and small-diameter slash in the middle and the larger diameter material on the outside.

If you have any questions regarding this evaluation, please let us know. I can be reached at (928) 556-2075 (mfairweather@fs.fed.us, Mary Lou).

/s/ Mary Lou Fairweather
MARY LOU FAIRWEATHER
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cc:
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